

Weekly Police Beat for the week ending April 15, 2016

The following is an unedited message from Captain Dave Falcinelli of the 2nd District of the Montgomery County Police:

Dear 2nd District Residents:

I want to share a story about an incident that happened on Saturday night. I am sharing it because I want our residents to be aware of the real dangers faced by police officers every day, and also out of frustration because these crimes could have very easily been prevented by heeding the advice the police department has been giving out for years now to **lock you cars, remove items of value or appear to be of value** and **DO NOT LEAVE SPARE KEYS INSIDE OF YOUR CARS!!!**

Our officers observed several cars travelling at a high rate of speed on Wisconsin Ave. One of the cars wrecked and its driver got out and into one of the other speeding cars that had stopped nearby. The officers made an attempt to stop this second car and it fled the scene with the officers pursuing it north towards Rockville. This car then wrecked in Rockville and the four occupants bailed out and fled. Two were caught a short while later after they were located by a K-9 officer hiding inside the rear fenced area of a commercial business. Two are still at-large.

Our investigation revealed that both cars had been recently stolen. Inside the stolen cars were several bags of loose change, and other items of value that had been taken from several unlocked cars that were parked in the same neighborhood as where the cars were stolen from. Inside of both now wrecked but recovered stolen cars were also the keys to the vehicles!!! It turns out that the suspects, while committing thefts from unlocked cars, found two spare keys left inside of cars and decided to steal the cars also. These crimes of theft from auto and auto theft would most likely not have occurred had these vehicle owners simply locked their car doors and removed the keys. To aggravate matters, officers risked their lives and the lives of those on the road trying to apprehend these felons. Needless to say, this event tied up a lot of police resources leaving very few left to protect everyone else for a small window of time.

I called the supervisor of our auto theft unit today and asked him a very simple question – Is it possible to steal a car that has a chip in the key without having that key? The answer is NO, unless you tow it away. Cars with chipped keys (which most do these days) **cannot** be stolen unless the key is present. Take away the key and you take away any opportunity for the crime. Leave the key and you have now placed police officers and fellow residents at risk.

The 2nd District itself remains a relatively safe area with most residents being good, law abiding citizens. This provides a false sense of security as there are suspects that prey on this area because they know that there are many that do not practice good personal security for their families and property. The two that were arrested were from DC, and both have prior interactions with law enforcement.

We are doing our best to catch those that prey on our neighborhoods, but we need help. It has to stop being so easy. It's a simple push of the LOCK button on your key fob. Lock your car every time you leave it and take the key with you. Take your wallets, purses, phones and computers out of your cars. It seems like such a simple task, but there are many that still do not seem to get it.

I am glad no one got hurt this time. I am hoping that each of you reading this makes it a point to heed our advice so there is not a next time.

Thanks in advance,

Captain David Falcinelli
Commander – 2nd District

Another Nighttime Copper Downspout Attempted Theft

Homeowner's Barking Dog Likely Scared Away the Would-Be Thief

On Wednesday evening (April 13) at about 10:30 p.m., the residents of a home on Primrose Street between Connecticut and Brookville turned off their downstairs lights and were going upstairs to retire for the night. As they climbed the stairs, their dog—who rarely barks—began barking incessantly and excitedly toward the rear of the house. The residents quickly turned on their outdoor floodlights and lit up the back yard. The homeowners saw nothing suspicious so they went to bed.

The next morning, the residents noticed a black plastic drainage pipe sitting on the grass in the back yard. The residents soon realized that the pipe had been attached to the bottom of a nearby downspout to allow the rainwater to flow away from the foundation—but it had been removed from the downspout. The resident then noticed that the downspout had been pulled away forcefully from the house wall and was partially detached. It was then that the resident realized that their dog must have been barking at the sounds made by the thief the previous evening. Evidently, the thief ran off before he was able to fully remove the downspout from the house.

The nighttime theft of copper gutters and downspouts has been occurring in the area in recent weeks. This is the fourth report of such activity in the Village in two weeks. Residents are urged to call the police immediately if they hear any noise at night; Village police officers will respond immediately and investigate.